

MENNONITE HISTORICAL BULLETIN

Vol. VIII

APRIL, 1947

No. 2

Leetonia or Nolds Mennonite Church

WILMER D. SWOPE

Mennonite settlers came early to Ohio. And one of the favored counties was that of Columbiana. (Actually Mahoning County was carved from Columbiana and Trumbull counties around 1850.) These settlers sought out the richest farming section the county had to offer. Much of these counties is hilly and in the northern part is a hard unworkable clay soil. The settlement was contained within a radius of approximately six to seven miles. The family of Jacob Oberholser was one of the first Mennonite families to locate in Columbiana County. They came from Bucks County, Pennsylvania, in 1807. This family numbered twenty-one. But today there is only one family in the church and in the settlement which can claim him as an ancestor.

He was an ordained minister, and probably the first resident minister in Ohio. He donated a plot of land for the Midway Church, formerly known as Oberholser's. The organization at Midway dates from 1824, part of the settlement in Beaver Township. The first resident Mennonite bishop in Ohio was Jacob Nold, also from Bucks County. Bishop Nold settled in northern Fairfield Township within a mile and a half of the Beaver Township line. Organized worship in the southern section of the settlement had its beginning in 1819. But it was not until 1828 that a log church was erected on section seven in Fairfield Township on ground donated to the church by Bishop Nold. Congregations at Georgetown, Canton, Orrville, and Wadsworth were organized by Bishop Jacob Nold.

There was but one settlement in Columbiana County, and there was but one congregation. However, because of the distance and slow transportation, there were three church houses erected: Metzlers or North Lima in 1824, Oberholser's or Midway in 1825, and Nolds or Leetonia in 1828. Early ministers who served the church are Henry Stauffer, Rudolph Blosser, John Blosser, Jacob Wisler, Samuel Good, and Jacob Koll.

This settlement is cosmopolitan in its make-up, because of the different families from so many Mennonite communities in America, and one or more from Europe.

Pennsylvania

Bucks County: Nold, Oberholser, Yoder, Detweiler

Lancaster County: Metzler, Witmer, Kolb, Moyer, Landis, Mellinger,



Leetonia Church

Stauffer, Wisler, Rohrer, Kurtz, Riehl

Berks County: Weaver

Westmoreland County: Christophel

Franklin County: Martin, Lehman, Leshner

Mercer County and Fayette County: Bixler, Rickert

Butler County or Harmony: Zeigler

Virginia

Rockingham County: Shank, Blosser, Good, Burkholder, Swope, Van Pelt

Ohio

Wayne County: Martin, Shoup, Hurst, Steiner

Stark County: Miller, Schloneger

Mahoning-Columbiana County: Detrow, Culler, Royer

Europe

France (Alsace-Lorraine): Basinger

Russia: Hubert, Brown

Canada: Bauman, Brubaker

In the pioneer days church services were held something like this: Lima, Midway, Leetonia each had buildings, and the congregation worshiped at each of these churches once a month, but the fourth Sunday was visiting Sunday; no service was held that day. In 1892 services were rearranged thus: Midway and Lima held services every alternate Sunday; Leetonia held services on Lima Sunday; both would combine to have services with Midway two Sundays of the month.

History of the "evergreen" (weekly services) Leetonia Church begins in approximately 1907. Men who were responsible for the evergreen services are I. B. Witmer, Otis N. Johns, John Riehl, John Wisler, Russell Royer, and Norman Bauman. The Sunday school at Leetonia was a pioneer in mission Sunday schools. Seeing a need for religious services in the Woodville community, they proceeded to organize a Sunday school giving workers and time freely. Services were held in

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An Introduction to the Tract, Two Kinds of Obedience

JOHN C. WENGER

One of the most valuable books in the Mennonite Historical Library of Goshen College is a German *Sammelband*, two thirds of which is devoted to a concordance, while the remaining third consists of nine Swiss Brethren items: The Schleithem Confession of Faith, 1527; Michael Sattler's Letter to the Horb Congregation, 1527; Sattler's Trial and Martyrdom, 1527; A Treatise on the Satisfaction (Atonement) of Christ; A Tract on Two Kinds of Obedience; and several other epistles and tracts. Herewith is presented an English translation of Item Six of the Collection, a tract entitled, *Von zweyerley gehorsam*.

The tract is anonymous and the date and place of composition are unknown. It is evident, however, that the treatise was written by a number of the Swiss Brethren group, either by Michael Sattler or by someone close to him theologically. The tract makes the same doctrinal assumptions as the Schleithem Confession of Faith and the treatise, *Concerning the Satisfaction of Christ*. It was probably written between 1525 and 1530.

The first sentence of the tract is its theme: *Es ist zweyerley gehorsam / ein Knechtischer vn Kindtlicher*. . . . Here are some of the leading concepts of the tract: (1) Filial obedience, explains the Swiss Brethren writer, springs from love, while servile obedience originates in selfishness. Love, declares the writer, is incomparably more effective in producing a redeemed life than is legalism. (2) In the second paragraph the writer anticipates a casuistical charge of antinomianism and dismisses it by pointing out that filial obedience is both higher and better than loveless conformity to the letter of law. (3) Only Christian freedom makes possible the creation of Christian character. Legalism starves the souls of men whether it be the Old Testament variety or a contemporary sixteenth-century type. (4) The chief function of the Law, however, is a good one, namely, to prepare sinners for redemption. Were it not for the Law of God men would go to perdition drowned in an ocean of "love for the creature." (5) The author makes the familiar Anabaptist distinction between the lower ethical standards of the Old Testament and the higher law of the New. (6) He then writes a description of Christian faith and life, made up of Biblical phrases taken from the words of Christ. (7) The tract

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More About Ordinations

I. ERWIN YOTHERS

In a recent issue you had an article about different ordinations.

We had several unusual happenings along that line [in the Franconia Conference in Pennsylvania]. Abram S. Overholt of Deep Run was a brother of Bishop Isaac Overholt of Blooming Glen. Abram went through the lot five times but was freed every time. His son, John Overholt, went through the lot seven times, always free. John's son Wilson was nominated in 1922, the youngest of a class of nine, and he was ordained.

Jacob Overholt was a deacon at Deep Run many years. His son, Joseph B. Overholt, was ordained deacon and that was the seventh time he was in the lot.

LEETONIA OR NOLDS MENNONITE CHURCH

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the Woodville school. Bro. I. B. Witmer relates an incident about this mission Sunday school. He was scheduled to hold a service in the evening at the school. This was in early April, and the weather was wet, the roads muddy. He had about given up going that night, but he felt an urge to go. That night half those present accepted Christ; there were but four present that night. This is another example of God's ways of working through men. This Sunday school was started around 1897 and discontinued around 1915.

The Sunday school has provided the church at large with men whose influence is felt in church councils. They are M. C. Lehman, missionary to India, and relief worker; Otis N. Johns, bishop and church-wide laborer; Levi and Mary Hurst, missionaries to Africa under the Lancaster County conference. The name of Enos Hartzler should also be included, as he served as a minister at Leetonia for several years until he moved to Wayne County to serve the church at Crown Hill. The deacon at Leetonia, Russell Royer, was a convert through the efforts of the Sunday school at Leetonia.

The Sunday-school library was founded in 1918. The summer Bible school was organized and first conducted in 1938. A missionary garden project was organized in 1942.

David Lehman and I. B. Witmer were the ministers in 1936 and had years of service behind them when the congregation sent a call to Stephen A. Yoder of Harper, Kansas. He accepted. Consequently, I. B. Witmer and S. A. Yoder are the present ministers; Russell Royer is the deacon. Leetonia has been shepherded and guided by Bishop A. J. Steiner for over forty years. The former bishops were Jacob Nold, Joseph Bixler, and John Burkholder.

Ten-year Averages for the Years 1922-1932 and 1932-1942 of the Sunday-school Attendance and Collections

1922-1932	
Average:	
Attendance—	79
Collections—	\$3.70
1932-1942	
Attendance—	112
Collections—	\$3.49
1942-1945	
Average:	
Attendance—	72
Collections—	\$7.16
1922-1932	
Highest attendance	272 in 1922
Highest collection	\$14.18 in 1927
Lowest attendance	21 in 1926
Lowest collection	\$.94 in 1922
1932-1942	
Highest attendance	253 in 1932
Highest collection	\$7.27 in 1938
Lowest attendance	37 in 1937
Lowest collection	\$1.36 in 1938
1942-1945	
Highest attendance	130 in 1945
Highest collection	\$43.01 in 1944
Lowest attendance	42 in 1945
Lowest collection	\$2.62 in 1943

Miscellaneous Items of Interest

The Ohio Mennonite church conference was held at Leetonia May 16, 1890. Here are a few of the resolutions passed by that conference.

The "Farmers' Alliance" is an association which the brethren of the Mennonite Church should not be allowed to join. They are classed with other secret societies.

A brother or sister shall not rent a house or other building to a secret organization, or for dances or other sinful purposes.

Ministers and deacons shall see that their churches are in peace and proper order before the bishop is called to hold communion.

Brethren and sisters are admonished not to go to any improper places or take part in any improper forms of amusements; not to go into saloons, poolrooms, or other like places.

Where there are small churches, growing cold, and not manifesting a proper interest in the growth and prosperity of the church, and who do not ask for communion, the minister who visits them should admonish them to observe the order of the church and hold communion. The apostles did break bread from house to house.

Ministers should not always stay at home; they should go out and labor in the vineyard and try to do some good. The little out-of-the-way churches are encouraged and strengthened by such visits and we ourselves who go to visit them feel encouraged and strengthened also.

The church at Leetonia was used by the Old Order Mennonites on the Midway or North Lima Sunday, until they erected a church of their own.

Communion was customarily held at Midway in the fall ever since the organization of church services. But this year

Two Kinds of Obedience

AN ANABAPTIST TRACT ON CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

TRANSLATED BY J. C. WENGER

Obedience is of two kinds, servile and filial. The filial has its source in the love of the Father, even though no other reward should follow, yea, even if the Father should wish to damn His child; the servile has its source in a love of reward or of oneself. The filial ever does as much as possible, apart from any command; the servile does as little as possible, yea, nothing except by command. The filial is never able to do enough for Him; but he who renders servile obedience thinks he is constantly doing too much for Him. The filial rejoices in the chastisement of the Father although he may not have transgressed in anything; the servile wishes to be without chastisement although he may do nothing right. The filial has its treasure and righteousness in the Father whom it obeys only to manifest His righteousness; the servile person's treasure and piety are the works which he does in order to be pious. The filial remains in the house and inherits all the Father has; the servile wishes to reject this and receive his lawful reward. The servile looks to the external and to the prescribed command of his Lord; the filial is concerned about the inner witness and the Spirit. The servile is imperfect and therefore his Lord finds no pleasure in him; the filial strives for and attains perfection, and for that reason the Father cannot reject him.

The filial is not contrary to the servile, as it might appear, but is better and higher. And therefore let him who is servile seek for the better, the filial; he dare not be servile at all.

The servile is Moses and produces Pharisees and scribes; the filial is Christ and makes children of God. The servile is either occupied with the ceremonies which Moses commanded or with those which people themselves have invented; the filial is active in the love of God and one's

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(1946), by vote of the congregation at Leetonia, communion was held for the first time.

The church was redecorated early in 1946. The church was plastered and painted inside, Venetian blinds were purchased by the young people, and a picture of Christ at Heart's Door was donated by an interested member, and hung in the front of the church. The young people and the Sunday school are purchasing indirect lighting fixtures for the church.

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Historical Sketch of Iowa Mennonite School

SAMUEL B. NAFZIGER

It is a small school, "but there are those who love it." Iowa Mennonite School is young but not too young to have won its way into the hearts of those closely associated with it. Many parents in Johnson, Washington, and Iowa counties refused to send their children to high school because of the dangers incident to sending them to secular schools. Others realized that their children were ready for high school at an age too young to attend a distant boarding school. Yet both these groups wanted Bible courses along with high school studies. This and other factors pointed to the need of a local church-controlled secondary school.

At a student luncheon in connection with district conference, September, 1943, it was noted that thirty-five students from this community were attending distant church schools. Some one philosophized that there would be a lot more attending high school if there were local church schools.

In various parts of the church, church leaders were interested in the high school problem in southeastern Iowa. On Feb. 4, 1944, at the annual ministers' meeting of the southeastern Iowa churches, Amos Gingerich raised the issue. After some discussion it was discovered that independent of this action the Mennonite Board of Education was interested from various angles, also. A committee of the board had arranged to meet church leaders on Feb. 7 to discuss the matter. These two groups met Feb. 7 at Wellman. Here the brethren E. E. Miller, Milo Kauffman, and Henry Schertz of the Board of Education conferred with the ministerial body of the Southeastern Iowa churches. Present were D. J. Fisher, J. Y. Swartzendruber, Simon Gingerich, Silas Horst, Amos Gingerich, Harold Brenneman, Joe Hershberger, George Miller, C. J. Yoder, Levi Schrock, Harvey Yoder, and Henry Kuhns. D. J. Fisher called the meeting to order and explained its purpose, after which E. E. Miller was asked to take charge. The brethren Miller, Schertz, and Kauffman expressed their views of the problem. Specifically mentioned was the difficulty of guiding students from secular high schools in a church college and guiding the very young high school students in boarding schools. E. E. Miller had made a survey of Iowa churches and reported: In East Union, Iowa City, West Union, Wellman, and Lower Deer Creek there were 242 young people in Sunday school between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. Of these, 97 were in high school, and of the 97 only about 25% were in church schools. After considerable discussion Silas Horst moved that a committee be chosen to study the school subject relative to this community in all its phases and report results to the ministerial body in about six weeks.

Amos Gingerich, J. Y. Swartzendruber, and Harold Brenneman were chosen by

ballot to compose this committee.

The committee reported in a special session at Wellman, March 20, 1944. J. Y. Swartzendruber was chairman. They had investigated:

1. The possibilities of opening a school.
2. Parochial schools in operation.
3. The possibilities of upholding the standards of the church by a church-controlled school.

The committee recommended that this committee be retained and the executive members of conference appoint two other members to constitute the school committee. This committee with the executive committee of conference was to have the authority to launch a school as the way opened.

Norman Hobbs and P. J. Blosser were appointed.

At Iowa City, on March 21, 1944, this new committee met with the executive committee of conference, composed of D. J. Fisher, Harvey Yoder, Will R. Eicher, and Ezra Roth. Location, buildings, and faculty were discussed. Plans were made to acquaint the constituency with the problem by having a special meeting at each church.

The possibility of using Lower Deer Creek Church for a building was discussed. Erecting a new building was considered. Difficulties seemed insurmountable and the school was not opened in the autumn of 1944.

At the annual district conference held Sept. 6, 7, 1944, at the Milford A.M. Church, Milford, Nebr., this committee made a report including recommendations to conference. Two more members were added to the committee: Will Eicher and Simon Gingerich.

On October 18, 1944, the committee met at the home of J. Y. Swartzendruber. The former organization was retained: J. Y. Swartzendruber, Chairman; Amos Gingerich, secretary; and Harold Brenneman, third member. Problems relative to buildings, finances, and faculty were discussed.

On June 11, 1945, the committee met with the newly elected board of trustees: D. B. Swartzendruber, chairman; Ed. Swartzendruber, Sam Schlabaugh, Lloyd Brenneman, Oren Yoder, George Miller, William Logan, and Roy Swartzendruber. The building was the main issue of this meeting.

Building in a time of national stress was difficult indeed. There were several possibilities: In the community was an unused high school building known as Center High. George Bender offered the use of a large dwelling house and a new basement to be the beginning of a permanent structure. Repeated attempts to procure Center High failed. The location of the George Bender building was not considered ideal. The War Production Board would not permit the erection of a new building but tendered as an alternative the adaptation of a used building.

Accordingly a dwelling house was purchased from Roy Yoder. A site was selected opposite the Lower Deer Creek Church. The land was then donated by the owner, Clarence Swartzendruber.

The four nearest churches, West Union, East Union, Wellman, and Lower Deer Creek, appointed finance committees in each church and the budget of \$6,000.00 was oversubscribed by several hundred dollars.

The dwelling house was moved about three and one-half miles to the site. A foundation had been prepared to receive it. Most of the work was done by donated labor. One person from each of the four nearest churches, W. S. Guengerich, J. Y. Swartzendruber, Sam Schlabaugh, and D. B. Swartzendruber, gave liberally of their time to assure the success of the project. Around this nucleus a large number of others from the community helped. On July 4, 1945, the site was first staked off and on Sept. 17 of that year school opened—in that interim a basement had been prepared, the house moved, and a two-story addition, 20x26, built to it.

On Sept. 17 the members of the conference school committee, the board of trustees, patrons, faculty, and students met for the opening program. The objectives for the school were outlined and the faculty presented. The meeting was inspirational and dedicatory.

During the time of building the committee members were also scouring the country for teachers. The result was: Silas Horst, South English, Iowa, principal; Samuel B. Nafziger, Kansas City, Kans., dean; and Esther Detwiler, Birch Tree, Mo.

During the summer of 1946 an additional building, 24x48, was erected on the campus. This in addition to the first building provides for the 1946-47 enrollment of 58—11 Juniors, 32 Sophomores, and 15 Freshmen. Elizabeth Showalter, Broadway, Va., was added to the faculty.

The school is filling a unique place in the community. A large number of students of high school age were not attending high school when this school opened and would not now be attending if Iowa Mennonite School had not opened.

INTRODUCTION TO TRACT

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closes with a paragraph which evinces a militant spirit of resistance to the accusations of the persecution by the state churches. The author has, moreover, absolute confidence in the providential care of God in the present, and he looks forward to a divine vindication when the Judgment scenes of the Apocalypse shall be enacted.

The Anabaptists, as Johannes Kessler (1502-1574) observed, insisted "even more vigorously than the papists on righteous works." The state churchmen of the sixteenth century, in a vain attempt to crush the Anabaptist movement, sometimes charged the Brethren with condoning and practicing gross immorality, while at other times they claimed that the Anabaptists were neolegalists, devoid of any appreciation of God's grace—*Werkheilige*, they said, who claimed to be a church without spot or wrinkle—perfectionists. The Schleithem Confession attests at once to the moral earnestness of the

Swiss Brethren and to their need of disciplining failing members of the group. The *Sammelband* treatise on the atonement, breathing the same spirit of New Testament Christianity, shows clearly that the Brethren believed alike that salvation was solely by the grace of God and that holiness of life was the earthly earmark of being God's child. The chief contribution of the present tract on Christian Obedience is its refutation of the unfounded notion that the Brethren were cold legalists, followers of the letter of the law, slavish conformers to Biblicism or even to church rules. The tract, produced as it was in the heat of battle, is perhaps somewhat lacking in literary unity, but its insights, its wholesome point of view, and its sturdy faith, make it after all a charming little treatise.

TWO KINDS OF OBEDIENCE (Continued from second page)

neighbor; yet he also submits himself to the ceremonies for the sake of the servants that he may instruct them in that which is better and lead them to sonship. The servile produces self-willed and vindictive people; the filial creates peaceable and mild-natured persons; the servile is severe (schwer) and gladly arrives quickly at the end of the work; the filial is light and directs its gaze to that which endures. The servile is malevolent (ungünstig) and wishes no one well but himself; the filial would gladly have all men to be as himself. The servile is the Old Covenant, and had the promise of temporal happiness, the filial is the New Covenant, and has the promise of eternal happiness, namely, the Creator Himself. The servile is a beginning and preparation for happiness; the filial is the end and completion (volkommenheit) itself. The servile endured for a time; the filial will last forever. The servile was a figure and shadow; the filial is the body and truth.

The servile was established to reveal and increase sin; the filial follows to do away with and extirpate the revealed and increased sin. For if a man wish to escape from sin he must first hate it, and if he would hate it he must first know it, and if he would know it there must be something to stir up and make known his hidden sin. Now it is Law or Scripture which does this: for as much as the Law demands, that much more the man turns from God to that which he has done, justifies himself therein, by his accomplishments, clings thereto as to his treasure and the greater such love becomes the more and the greater will grow his hatred for God and for his neighbor. For the more and the closer a man clings to the creature the farther he is from God. The more he desires the creature the less he will have of the Creator. Moreover the law gives occasion to people to depart farther from God, not because of itself (for it is good) but because of the sin which is in man. This is also the reason why Paul says that the law was given that it might increase sin, that sin might thereby become known. Yea, the law is

the strength of sin and therefore it is just like the servile obedience, that is, obedience to law, which leads people into the most intense hatred of God and of one's neighbor. Therefore filial obedience is a certain way through which man escapes from such hatred and receives the love of God and of one's neighbor. Therefore as one administers death, the other administers life. The one is the Old Testament; the other, the New.

According to the Old Testament only he who murdered was guilty of judgment; but in the New, he also who is angry with his brother. The Old gave permission for a man to separate from his wife for every reason; but not at all in the New, except for adultery. The Old permitted swearing if one swore truly, but the New will know of no swearing. The Old has its stipulated punishment, but the New does not resist the evil.

The Old permitted hatred for the enemy; the New loves him who hates, blesses him who curses, prays for those who wish one evil; gives alms in this manner that the left hand does not know what the right has done; says his prayer secretly without evident and excessive babbling of mouth; and judges and condemns no one; takes the mote out of the eye of one's brother after having first cast the beam out of one's own eye; fasts without any outward pomp and show; is like a light which is set on a candlestick and lightens everyone in the house; is like a city built on a hill, being everywhere visible; is like good salt that does not become tasteless, being pleasing not to man but to God alone; is like a good eye which illuminates the whole body; takes no anxious thought about clothing or food, but performs his daily and upright tasks; does not cast pearls before swine, nor that which is holy before dogs; seeks, asks and knocks; finding, receiving and having the door opened for him; enters through the narrow way and the small gate; guards himself from the Pharisees and scribes as from false prophets; is a good tree and brings forth good fruit; does the will of his Father, hearing what he should do, and then doing it.

[The church of true believers] is built upon Christ the chief cornerstone; stands against all the gates of hell, that is, against the wrathful judgment of the Pharisees, of the mighty ones of earth, and of the scribes; is a house and temple of God, against which no wind and no water may do anything, standing secure, so that everything else which withstands the teaching which proceeds from it, denying its truth, may itself finally give evidence that it is a dwelling of God—although it is now maligned by the Pharisees and scribes as a habitation of the devil: yea, finally they shall hear, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God, etc. But of the house of the Pharisees and scribes, it shall be said, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit,

A Letter from a Dutch Mennonite

[Stommeerkade 23]
Aalsmeer
August 26, 1946

Mr. J. S. Hartzler
1300 Prairie Street
Elkhart, Indiana

Dear Mr. Hartzler:

From my friend, Johan Hilverda, I received the letter you wrote to him. As he was very busy preparing for his examination, he did not yet write to you. He has now passed his examination, but within a fortnight he will start for America where he will study for a year at Bethel College. He asked me to continue his correspondence with America. I am therefore writing this letter instead of Johan. My name is Adriaan Zwartendijk; I am twenty-one years old and a theological student. I want to become a Mennonite minister.

After this short introduction I can reply to your letter. We were very glad for it and published a translation of it in our youth paper, *DE TOORTS* (The Torch). The history of the Prairie Street Mennonite Church is very interesting, and many of our young people read it with great interest. The Mennonite congregation of Aalsmeer also has a very old history. Concerning it Professor Kühler writes in his book, *HISTORY OF THE DUTCH MENNONITES IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY*: "The tenth of April 1534 the first three of the many, many martyrs were put on the funeral pile. Among them were two inhabitants of Aalsmeer, both called Jan Dirks, and an inhabitant of Knollendam, Claes Matthys. Among the tedious reports of the trials we suddenly find a report which shows us the spirit of these first three martyrs. The councillors observed that the condemned were constant till their death, going to their death like sheep, so that it was a marvelous and moving sight."

Later on there were seven Mennonite churches [branches] in Aalsmeer. (You see it was not only in America that the Mennonites were divided.) But gradually they united, the last merger occurring in 1866. Today there is in Aalsmeer one Mennonite church with nearly eight hundred members. The youth work flourishes very much in Aalsmeer. Over six hundred children meet every Sunday, divided into several groups as to age. By having such an active youth work we hope to keep our congregation strong and virile, so that it may be a rock in the combat for God's sake.

Very sincerely yours in Christ.
Adriaan Zwartendijk.

and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird, etc. But to God (through whom everything which boasts that is not, may be manifested that it is) be all honor, praise and glory through His beloved Son, our Lord and Brother Jesus Christ, Amen.

